

# Get to know animals

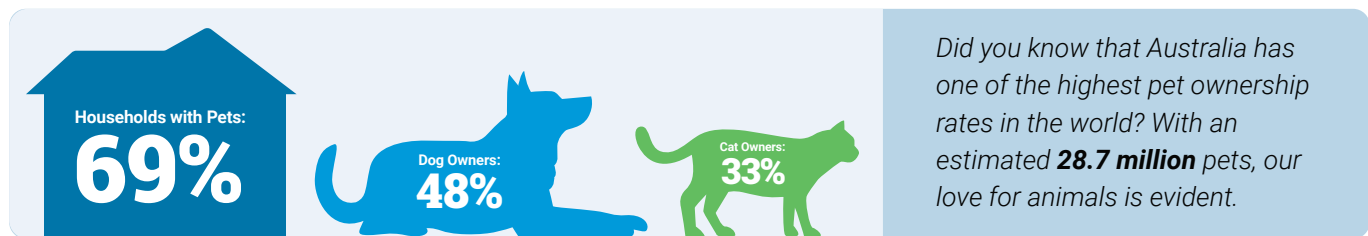
## The basics



## Introduction

Living in a lively community with lots of people and animals is awesome! One of the best parts of our day is meeting and playing with the animals around us, and they love it just as much as we do. However, there are times when animals may signal that they need space or aren't in the mood for attention. It's crucial for us to recognise and respect these signs to ensure their well-being and comfort.

**This guide is designed to help you better understand the animals in our community by interpreting their body language. By learning to read these signals, you'll know when they are happy and relaxed or when they need some alone time.**



With this guide, you will be well-equipped to safely and respectfully interact with the incredible animals in our community. Happy animal interactions!

## Recipe

### Homemade chicken treats for cats and dogs

#### Ingredients

- ▶ 1 1/2 cups **cooked chicken breast** (*shredded*)
- ▶ 1 tablespoon **sunflower oil**
- ▶ 1/2 cup **chicken stock**
- ▶ 1 cup **whole wheat flour**
- ▶ 1/3 cup **polenta** or (*cornmeal*)

#### Instructions

- 1** Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F). Cover a baking sheet with baking paper and set aside. In a medium bowl, combine shredded chicken with oil and stock. For a finer texture, you can blend the chicken with stock prior to adding oil.
- 2** Add flour and polenta and mix until it's all combined and resembles a dough. Flour your work surface and roll out the dough to 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick (about 0.5-1 cm thick).
- 3** Cut out your treats in any desired shape and place them on the baking sheet. They can be placed close together, as they won't get bigger during baking. Bake for 20 minutes in the center of the oven. Let them cool for about 10-15 minutes before serving.

#### Notes

If cooking fresh chicken breast, cook it in water in a pot covered with a lid. Once the chicken is fork-tender, remove the pot from heat and allow it to cool before using. While this recipe uses chicken breast, you could experiment with darker meat such as chicken thighs. You can use the water you cooked the chicken in instead of chicken stock.

# Animal safety & should you hug an animal

## Animal handling techniques

### How to Approach a Cat in Your Community

At RSPCA NSW, we believe that the best way to keep cats safe is to keep them indoors. However, many cats are allowed to wander. This guide will help you approach a cat you may encounter in your community safely and respectfully.

### Tips for a Successful Meet and Greet with a Cat

- **Get on the Cat's Level**  
Sit down to appear less intimidating and help the cat feel more comfortable.
- **Offer Your Hand**  
Extend your hand with a closed fist, allowing the cat to come to you. Let them sniff and decide the next move.
- **Go at Her Speed**  
Let the cat initiate contact and set the pace of the interaction. Be patient and take it slow.
- **Avoid Staring**  
Staring can be seen as aggressive. Make brief eye contact, then look away. Slow blinks can communicate friendliness.
- **Observe Body Language**  
Pay attention to signs of discomfort or overstimulation. Focus on petting safe areas like the cheeks, chin, and neck.
- **Respect the Cat's Space**  
If the cat shows disinterest or moves away, don't force interaction. Allow them to have space and come to you if they choose.



**A cat showing their belly feels safe and relaxed, but it's not an invitation for a belly rub. Try stroking their forehead or cheek instead.**

Every cat has their own unique personality. By respecting their signals and building trust, you can create positive and meaningful interactions with the cats in your community.

### How to Approach Dogs in Your Community

We often encounter dogs being walked in our community, and while we may want to show them love, some dogs may be anxious and not wish to receive it. Here are some tips on the best ways to approach a dog safely and respectfully:

### Tips for a Successful Meet and Greet with a Dog

- **Always Ask the Owner**  
Before approaching a dog, always ask the owner for permission to pet their dog. If the owner says no, respect their decision. They know their dog's temperament and current mood best.
- **Approach from an Angle**  
Approach the dog from an angle, rather than directly from the front or rear, to appear less threatening.
- **Extend Your Hand Slowly**  
Slowly extend the back of your hand with fingers curled under and allow the dog to sniff.
- **Pet in Safe Areas**  
Stroke the dog on the side of the chest, the shoulders, or under the chin. Avoid petting on top of the head.
- **Respect the Dog's Signals**  
If the dog backs away or doesn't sniff your hand, don't continue to pat. Respect their need for space.

By following these tips, you can ensure that your interactions with dogs in the community are safe and positive for both you and the dogs.



### Should I hug a dog or cat?

It's best to avoid hugging a dog or cat you come across in the community. While hugs are a common sign of affection between people, they can feel threatening to animals. Instead, interact with gentle pets or strokes:

- **For Dogs:** Pet along their shoulders, avoiding the top of the head.
- **For Cats:** Offer gentle rubs or strokes on the cheeks or chin, avoiding their face.

Respecting their comfort zones will help ensure a positive interaction for both you and the animal.

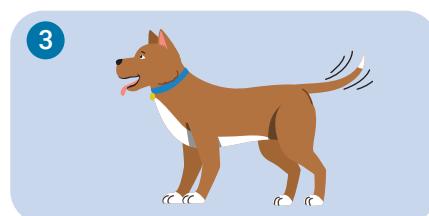
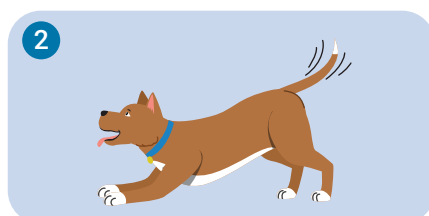
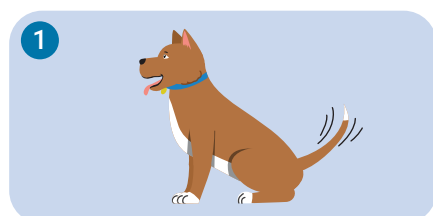
# Learning their language

## What does a dog's body language mean?

A dog's body language can be subtle, so it's not always easy to accurately read how they're feeling. It is important to keep an eye on a dog's behaviour and be on the lookout for any changes, as these can be a sign that something is wrong. **Use this guide to help you recognise important body language signals and get to know how a dog might be feeling.**

### A happy dog

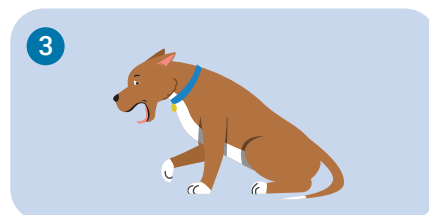
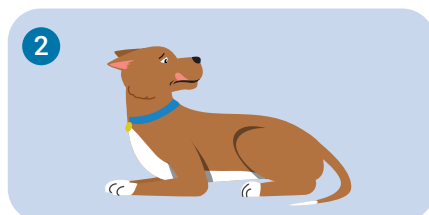
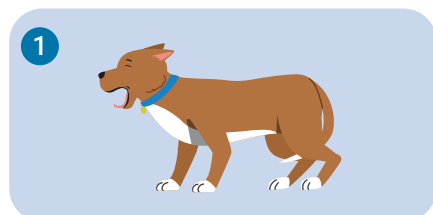
A dog who is happy will be relaxed.



- 1 Dog has a relaxed body posture and smooth hair, the mouth is open and relaxed, ears are in a natural position, the tail is wagging and the eyes are a normal shape.
- 2 Dog is inviting play with bottom raised, smooth hair and a high wagging tail. Eyes are a normal shape, ears are in a natural position and they may be barking excitedly.
- 3 Dog's weight is distributed across all four paws, hair is smooth, tail is wagging, face is interested, alert and relaxed and their mouth is open.

### A worried dog

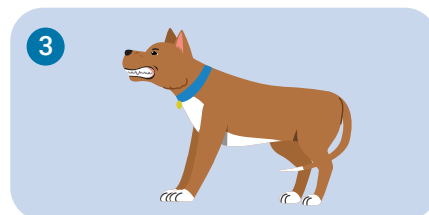
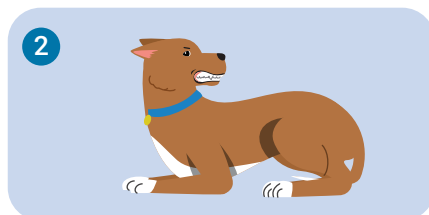
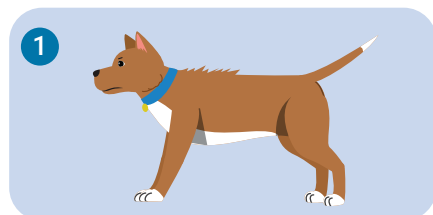
These dogs are telling you that they're uncomfortable and don't want you to go near them.



- 1 Dog is standing but body posture and head position is low. Tail is tucked under, ears are back and the dog is yawning.
- 2 Dog is lying down and avoiding eye contact or turning head away from you, lip licking and with ears back.
- 3 Dog is sitting with head lowered, ears are back, tail tucked away, not making eye contact, yawning, raising a front paw.

### An angry or very unhappy dog

These dogs aren't happy and want you to stay away or go away.



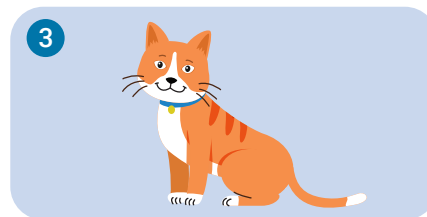
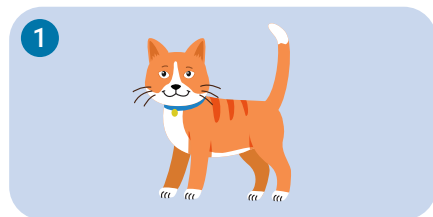
- 1 Dog is standing with a stiffened body posture, weight forward, ears are up, hair raised, eyes looking at you – pupils dark and enlarged – tail is up and stiff, wrinkled nose.
- 2 Dog is lying down covering, ears flat, teeth showing, tail down between legs.
- 3 Dog is standing with body down and weight towards the back, head tilted upwards, mouth tight, lips drawn back, teeth exposed, eyes staring, ears back and down, snarling.

# What does a cat's body language mean?

A cat's body language can be subtle, so it's not always easy to accurately read how they're feeling. **To understand a cat's psychology, look at his or her eyes, tail, mouth and posture and use this guide to help you recognise important body language signals.**

## A happy cat

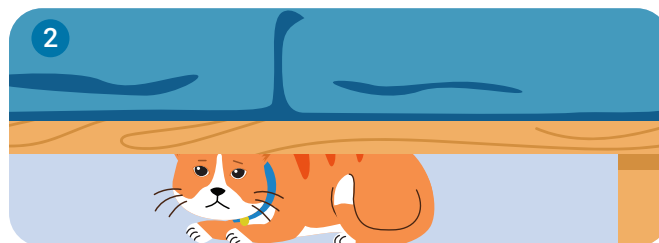
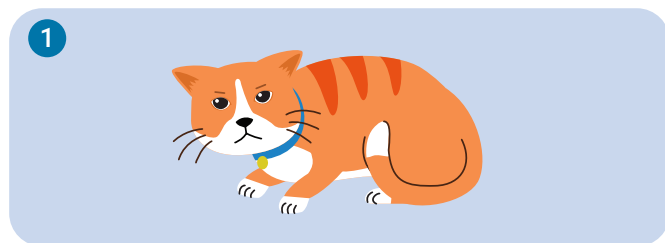
These cats are relaxed and happy:



- 1 Cat is standing, has a relaxed body posture, ears are in a natural position, tail is held upright with the tip of the tail curved, eyes are normal shape, mouth is closed.
- 2 Cat is lying down, belly is exposed, body posture is relaxed, body is stretched out, ears are in a natural position, eyes may be partly closed, mouth is closed.
- 3 Cat is sitting, body posture is relaxed, tail is held out loosely from body, ears are in natural position, eyes are a normal shape, mouth is closed.

## A worried cat

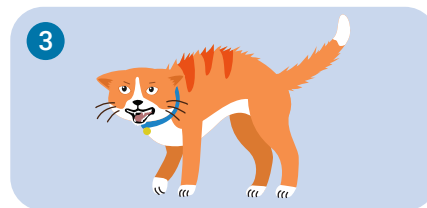
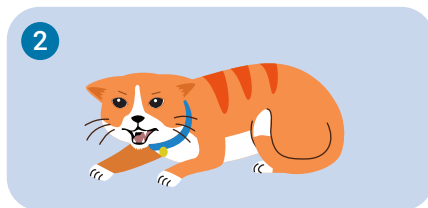
These cats are telling you that they're uncomfortable and don't want you near them



- 1 Cat is in a crouched position, muscles are tense, body is held tightly, tail is tucked tightly into body, ears are slightly swivelled sideways, head is slightly lowered and tucked into body, pupils are dilated, mild tension shows in face.
- 2 Cats who are worried or anxious may hide.

## An angry or very unhappy cat

These cats aren't happy and want you to stay away or go away:



- 1 Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head, pupils are dilated, tail is held tightly into body, body is tense, limbs are held tight and close to body.
- 2 Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head and drawn back, body is slightly rolled over to one side, pupils are dilated, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing.
- 3 Cat is standing, back is arched, body is held sideways, hair is raised, posture is tense, front paw is slightly lifted off the ground (ready to swipe if needed), ears are lowered and pointing out to the side, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing, tail is tense.